

Former Dale County clerk charged with theft

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The case of a former Dale County solid waste clerk, who authorities said didn't account for more than \$16,000 in landfill and residential garbage funds, could go before a grand jury next year.

Cara Bottoms Watson, 53, of Skipperville, is charged with first-degree theft of property. According to a special report from the state Department of Examiners of Public Accounts,

Watson did not show "just cause" for \$16,378.10 in landfill and residential garbage receipts that were collected over two years but not deposited into the Dale County Commission's official bank accounts.

The report said Watson declined to pay the charges. Officials said she resigned from the department.

Several cases of public employees being charged with theft have been filed in the Wiregrass in recent years.

Former Level Plains

clerk/magistrate Marsha Neagley, 59, was charged this year with first-degree theft of property and use of office for personal gain after more than \$4,400 in discrepancies were found in a city bank account where traffic fines were deposited.

According to *Dothan Eagle* archives, Slocomb Clerk Patsy Baron was charged in 2006 with theft after city officials discovered about \$10,000 missing from city coffers.

Daleville assistant magistrate Robin A. Amaya,

42, pleaded guilty to theft in 2006 after a spot check audit was conducted and discrepancies were found in city books, according to court records.

Adams said public officials who steal often start out with small thefts and eventually work their way up.

"Typically, they are gonna get caught when either an audit is done or someone complains," he said.

Watson's case was set to go before a Dale County Grand Jury in March.